

YOU CAN HELP

We are an all-volunteer organization, with non-profit, tax-exempt status. We are dependent on contributions to carry on our work. There are many ways in which you can help:

- Make a tax-deductible contribution of any size to the **Boston Committee for Health Rights in Central America**
- Subscribe to *LINKS*
- Attend our educational events
- Invite us to make a presentation at your workplace or community organization
- Get directly involved in our projects

Whatever you choose to do, we urge you to stay informed on developments in Central America, and to do what you can to help stop the tragedy which deepens each day due to the actions of the U.S. government.

Boston Committee for Health Rights in Central America.

P.O. Box 796, Astor Station
Boston, MA 02123

- Enclosed is my donation of _____ payable to the **Boston Committee for Health Rights in Central America.**
- Please include me on your mailing list to be notified of Committee-sponsored events.
- I am interested in subscribing to *LINKS*. Please send me a sample copy.
- I would like more information about the Committee and how I may become more involved.

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BOSTON COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH RIGHTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Since 1978, over 150,000 people have died and hundreds of thousands more have fled their homes as violence sweeps through Central America. The United States government is deeply involved, and there is talk of sending U.S. combat forces into Nicaragua or El Salvador, evoking comparisons to the war in Vietnam. What is going on?

HEALTH— AN AVENUE TO UNDERSTANDING

Since 1980, the Boston Committee for Health Rights in Central America has shown that knowledge of health conditions in Central America can help in understanding this war-torn region. Infant mortality rates are up to ten times higher than in the U.S., and as many as three of every four children are malnourished. Lack of access to arable land, poor sanitation, inadequate housing, illiteracy, unemployment, and the lack of medical care are responsible. These conditions have motivated movements for social change.

In El Salvador, the government has imprisoned, killed, and "disappeared" health workers who have cared for patients regardless of their poverty or alleged political beliefs. It destroyed the medical school of the University of El Salvador. These abuses of medical neutrality—violations of the Geneva Convention—are examples of how the Salvadoran government has used brutal repression to block social change. This is the regime the U.S. government maintains in power.



photo: Jim Harney

In Nicaragua, in the first five years since the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship, polio has been eradicated, health care is now free for all Nicaraguans, and the infant mortality rate has been reduced by 40%. The Sandinista government has achieved these results, despite economic crisis, through widespread participation by the population in nationwide campaigns for childhood immunization, sanitation, nutrition, and the treatment of childhood diarrhea. A similar campaign reduced the national illiteracy rate from 52% to 17%. This is the government the U.S. government is trying to destroy. And the *contras*—the army it has created for this purpose—have made a special target of the new Nicaraguan health system and its workers, precisely because they have been so successful.

The Boston Committee for Health Rights in Central America is a group of nurses, doctors, students, and other health care workers who are working to promote constructive change in Central America and in U.S. policy toward the region.

Our activities include:

Educational outreach: We present educational programs to audiences in the health sector and to the general public. Members have spoken at medical centers, health profession schools, and professional meetings as well as at churches, union halls, public schools, community centers, and in the local media. We have produced a slide show on health care in Nicaragua. We sponsor visiting health workers from Central America in local events. We distribute *LINKS*, a national newsletter on health in Central America, published by the National Central America Health Rights Network (NCAHRN).

Data collection and dissemination: We participated in two Public Health delegations which investigated health conditions and human rights in El Salvador. We helped document the impact of the Nicaraguan Revolution on the health of the people of Nicaragua, as well as the health effects of the U.S. sponsored war. We have written articles on these topics for professional publications. We receive and respond to reports of abuses of medical neutrality in El Salvador and Guatemala, and by the *contras* in Nicaragua.

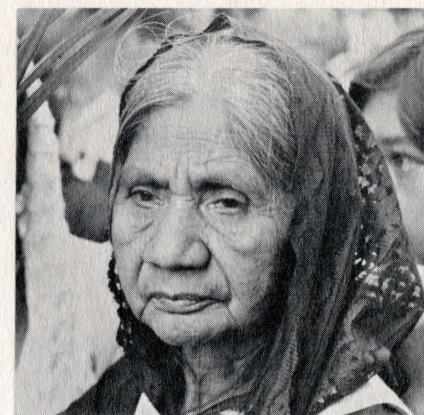


photo: Jim Harney

Legislative: We meet with members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation and their staffs to keep them informed about Central America from a public health perspective. We have presented testimony at congressional hearings on human rights in El Salvador.

Material aid and technical assistance: The Committee has raised thousands of dollars for food and medical relief for refugees within El Salvador and money for medications to treat the victims of incendiary bombing by the Salvadoran government. We are assisting the medical school of the University of El Salvador to rebuild. Through our Nicaragua Medical Aid Campaign, we have sent thousands of dollars worth of medical supplies to the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health, and to ecumenical organizations throughout Nicaragua. We are helping to equip the clinic built by U.S. volunteers of the Vecino Brigade in Esteli, Nicaragua. We have participated in the U.S.-Nicaragua Colloquia on Health, held annually in Managua since 1983. We have participated in the Guatemala Health Rights Support Project, which trains indigenous Guatemalans as local health promoters.

Collaboration with other organizations: Through our participation in the Boston Area Network on Central America (BANCA), we work cooperatively with dozens of local organizations concerned with Central America. We also work with the National Central America Health Rights Network (NCAHRN), which comprises over 45 similar organizations across the country.